REMARKS

Favorable reconsideration is respectfully requested.

The claims are 1 to 9.

The above amendment is responsive to points set forth in the Official Action.

In this regard, some features of claim 4 have been incorporated into claim 1.

The significance of this amendment will become further apparent from the remarks below.

Claims 1 to 9 have been rejected as anticipated by McDonnell (U.S. 6,600,011), column 1, lines 5 to 65, column 4, lines 20 to 55, column 5 through column 6, line 67, column 10 through column 11, line 35, Example 1 and Example 3c.

This rejection is respectfully traversed.

The present invention relates to the **continuous drying** of gelled and washed polymers containing N or amino, ammonium or spirobicyclic ammonium groups, obtained by polymerization, cross linkage and optionally alkylation **in a fluidized bed.**

These special polymers themselves, which are dried according to the present invention, and their preparation, are not part of the invention; they and their preparation are state of the art, as already cited in the present specification (see page 3, lines 25 to 30, page 4, page 5, lines 6 to 10).

McDonnell especially describes the spray drying of such polymers. Spray drying is not the same as the continuous drying in a fluidized bed.

From McDonnell it can be seen that before the spray drying step, a slurry of the polymer has to be prepared. As described, for instance in Example 3a or column 10, lines 8 et seq., the gel is added to water to obtain a slurry. After spray drying, a further thermal treatment has to be done.

In column 1, lines 55 et seq. it is described that many polymeric hydrogels experience a cohesive phase at certain levels of moisture content and that during this phase, polymer particles

adhere to each other and equipment surface. This makes drying the hydrogel particularly challenging.

As is taught by McDonnell (column 2, lines 53ff), spray during these polymers has many advantages over previously known drying techniques and solves the problems of agglomeration.

In Example 3c, McDonnell teaches that batch drying of a hydrogel in a fluidized bed is disadvantageous compared to spray drying, because the gel agglomerates during the drying procedure and has to be broken up before further processing. No continuous fluidized bed process is disclosed.

Accordingly, one skilled in the art reading McDonnell would never conclude that a continuous drying in a fluidized bed, as presently claimed, could avoid this disadvantage.

With regard to the rejection of claim 8 as unpatentable over U.S. 4,432,016, this rejection is inapplicable to the present claims since claim 8 is now dependent on above amended claim 1.

No further issues remaining, allowance of this application is respectfully requested.

If the Examiner has any comments or proposals for expediting prosecution, please contact undersigned at the telephone number below.

Respectfully submitted,

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THE COMMISSIONER IS AUTHORIZED TO CHARGE ANY DEFICIENCY IN THE FEES FOR THIS PAPER TO DEPOSIT ACCOUNT NO. 23-0975

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